

Is Your Organization Ready For Volunteers?

Before any organization can effectively utilize volunteers, its managers must appraise the organization's capacity to accommodate them. Volunteer management philosophy and practices are important, though often neglected, dimensions of this capacity.

Understanding and accepting the responsibility of volunteer management is crucial to planning, developing and maintaining a viable volunteer program. To understand this responsibility requires recognition of the value volunteers bring to nonprofit agencies; to accept this responsibility dictates that all basic management functions applicable to paid staff are similarly applied to non-paid staff (volunteers) as well. Such a philosophy on volunteerism encourages optimum utilization of volunteer human resources, providing benefits far more desirable than those created by the "just-a-volunteer" mentality. For nonprofit organizations that depend on volunteers, one clear benefit of properly managing them is a solid work team comprised of paid and non-paid staff.

On the other hand, neglecting to properly manage volunteers creates significant problems. Poor performance by the volunteer; conflict between volunteers and paid staff; and high volunteer turnover are practical examples of these problems. For the planned and existing volunteer program, many of these problems can be prevented or minimized by incorporating a systematic volunteer management assessment process.

TIP: Complete the attached self-assessment to evaluate your organization's volunteer management capabilities. If used in planning for a volunteer program, results of the self-assessment indicate the capacity of an organization to integrate volunteers into its staffing. Similarly, established volunteer programs are able to determine volunteer management strengths and weaknesses by performing regular self-assessment.

A
Volunteer
Management
Tip From:

Missoula
Senior Service
Corps

337 Stephens Ave.
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Missoula
Aging Services

Volunteer Program Self-Assessment

Instructions: please rate your volunteer program in each of the following areas. The maximum points allowed for each area is indicated in parentheses. Tally the points for each section. Add the totals of all sections to obtain the grand total.

A. Organizational Climate

- _____ (2) The volunteer coordinator has full approval and support of the staff and administration.
- _____ (4) Adequate staff support is provided for the volunteer program/services.
- _____ (5) Management of the volunteer program/service is clearly defined as a routine part of a designated staff job.
- _____ (4) The agency has a clearly defined rationale for the use of volunteers and this rationale does not displace paid staff.

_____ **Total score for section A**

B. Volunteer Administration

- _____ (2) A regular volunteer needs assessment is conducted.
- _____ (5) Job descriptions are in use and are kept current.
- _____ (4) Specific recruitment approaches are used to attract the appropriate volunteers.
- _____ (5) Potential volunteers complete applications that are designed to provide specific information useful to screening, interviewing and placement.
- _____ (4) There is a standard process for interviews, including a standard format for the interviewer outlining appropriate questions asked each potential volunteer.
- _____ (1) The interview process enables a potential volunteer to screen the agency.
- _____ (3) There is an annual evaluation of volunteer satisfaction, which includes evaluation of volunteer administration.

_____ **Total score for section B**

C. Orientation and Training

- _____ (5) Training is provided for paid staff in their relationship with and supervision of volunteers.
- _____ (3) Each volunteer is given an orientation to the agency.
- _____ (4) A volunteer handbook (which contains relevant policies/procedures and which explains the volunteer's relationship to clients, the organization, and other staff) is provided to each volunteer.
- _____ (5) Specific orientation and skill training is provided for each volunteer job placement.
- _____ (3) Volunteers are given access, as appropriate, to the in-service training and other educational opportunities provided to agency staff.

_____ **Total score for section C**

D. Support

- _____ (5) Adequate staff supervision and support are available.
- _____ (5) Sufficient tools, space, etc. are available to accommodate the volunteer's work.
- _____ (3) Staff periodically meets with volunteers to review performance.
- _____ (3) Adequate records are maintained of volunteer services (e.g. service hours, reimbursements, etc.)
- _____ (3) Volunteer recognition is incorporated into recognition given other staff.
- _____ (1) Volunteers are featured in agency publications or other appropriate sources for highlighting staff.
- _____ (1) Volunteers are nominated for national and/or regional awards as appropriate in recognition of their achievements with the organization.

_____ **Total score for section D**

E. Finance

- _____ (3) There is adequate data to calculate the cost of the volunteer program/service.

_____ (3) The value of volunteer services is calculated and included in the agency's financial statement.

_____ (4) The volunteer program/service has a budget or line item that is included in the agency's annual budget.

_____ **Total for section E**

F. Evaluation

_____ (5) Each volunteer (including governance/policy making volunteers) completes a self-evaluation annually.

_____ (4) Supervisory staff conducts regular appraisal of volunteers.

_____ (1) The Board of Directors reviews volunteer evaluation data annually.

_____ **Total for section F**

_____ **Grand total of sections A-F (100 possible)**

What does your score tell you?

Below 55

Reflect on the areas you have not marked as representative of your agency. These are important issues to resolve before considering a volunteer initiative in your organization.

55 – 70

While your organization has much to offer, there is still a ways to go before you've created an environment to foster a strong volunteer initiative. Ask for resources which will address those needs indicated by this assessment.

70 – 85

Your organization has the strong beginnings for utilizing non-paid staff effectively. Don't stop there! Consider integrating policies that reflect those areas still missing to create the best volunteer program you can!

85-100

High scores here indicate your agency understands the importance of volunteer management. Remember though, that this is a dynamic arena and that the face of volunteering is apt to change over time. Revisiting and revising the policies and procedures you have in place is a must to remain the best volunteer program you can be!

Volunteer Needs Analysis

There are eight necessary elements for a successful volunteer program.

- Organizational assessment
- Development of volunteer job
- Plan for volunteer training/development
- Marketing and recruitment
- Interviewing, screening and placement
- Volunteer supervision
- Program and volunteer evaluations
- Volunteer recognition

Determining a clear role for volunteers is the first step in creating a successful volunteer program. This role must parallel the agency's mission and specific program goals. Equally important, your agency must have the capacity (i.e. supervision, space, etc.) to handle volunteers.

How do you determine exactly where volunteers can be productively used? By doing a needs analysis. This assessment identifies which major tasks are appropriate to volunteer involvement. Important to this process is the appraisal of paid staff's attitude toward volunteers. In addition, the agency should have a sound rationale for involving volunteers. (Using volunteers to displace paid staff is considered to be ethically unsound and should always be avoided.)

Before any other steps can be taken in the process of creating a volunteer program, a needs analysis must be completed. Forging ahead without completing this vital step is a prescription for failure.

Tip:

To ensure the success of your volunteer program, carefully appraise your agency's need for and capacity to handle volunteers. Organizational assessment is the foundation upon which effective volunteer programs are built. In doing a volunteer needs assessment ask these questions?

1. Is the need genuine or contrived?
2. Can the identified task(s) be done satisfactorily on a part-time basis or as a shared job?
3. Is it probable that the kind of volunteers required for the job can be recruited, and in the number needed?
4. What is the cost/benefit ratio to the agency?
5. Can essential support be provided?
6. Would a volunteer want to perform these tasks?

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Volunteer Needs Analysis

Instructions: Have each department/program list the major tasks that need to be done. Decide which tasks are best handled by volunteer or paid staff.

Major task	This task is best handled by:	
	Volunteer	Paid Staff
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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